DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 087 945 CE 001 066

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TITLE	Characteristics Contributing to the Success of Young Farmer Chapters.
INSTITUTION	Texas A and M Univ., College Station. Dept. of Agricultural Education.
PUB DATE	Oct 72
NOTE	11p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Research; *Organizations (Groups); *Program Evaluation; Program Improvement; Program Proposals; *Success Factors; *Young Farmer Education
IDENTIFIERS	Texas

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to obtain information that would add to the knowledge available to personnel at State and local levels in order to develop recommendations to enhance the performance of the young farmer program. One hundred thirty-eight young farmer chapters constituted the sample for the study and were rated at three levels by area supervisors of vocational agriculture on the basis of questionnaire responses from the advisors of the chapters sampled. Chapters considered to be highly successful had significantly higher ratings assigned to the importance of young farmer chapters by advisors, younger members, more members who had completed high school and had one college degree, and more members engaged in an agricultural occupation other than production agriculture. There were also more meetings with more people in attendance, more community service activities, and more resource people used in teaching in the high level chapters. Finally, there were significantly more teachers of vocational agriculture employed in the schools where chapters were ranked high. Ten recommendations for improving the Texas young farmer program were made on the basis of the conclusions. (AG)

ED 087945

A REPORT OF RESEARCH

CHARACTERISTICS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF YOUNG FARMER CHAPTERS

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October, 1972

NE 001 066

Texas A&M University
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AGRICULTURAL
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FOREWORD

Since the State Association of Young Farmers of Texas was organized in 1954, a total of 320 chapters have been granted charters. However, only 185 were functioning as members of the State Association during the school year 1969-70. Reasons for the decline are not known, but is due, in part to the consolidation of chapters in areas of sparce population. The major reason may be a lack of information needed for the development of guidelines to enhance the establishment of new chapters and for the growth of those well established.

The central purpose of this study was to obtain information that would add to the knowledge available to personnel at state and local levels who formulate policy and make recommendations regarding young farmer education. Credit for the major portion of the research belongs to Dr. Derrell L. Steakley, Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education, Tarleton State College, Stephenville, Texas. Persons desiring additional information about the research should write or call Dr. Steakley.

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October, 1972

CHARACTERISTICS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF YOUNG FARMER CHAPTERS

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics that contributed to the successful operation of young farmer chapters in order that recommendations could be developed to enhance the performance of the young farmer program. The following specific objectives developed to accomplish this purpose were:

1. To identify selected characteristics of advisors of young farmer chapters and to determine the relationship between these characteristics and the level of performance of chapters.
2. To identify selected characteristics of young farmer members and to determine the relationship between these characteristics and the level of performance chapters.
3. To identify selected characteristics of chapters and activities and to determine the relationship between these characteristics and the level of performance of chapters.
4. To identify procedures utilized in conducting chapter activities and to determine the relationship between these procedures and the level of performance of chapters.

5. To identify selected characteristics of local schools and communities where chapters were located and to determine the relationship between these characteristics and the level of performance of chapters.

6. To develop recommendations that could be utilized to enhance the young farmer program.

The population for this study was all young farmer chapters that had received a charter from the State Association of Young Farmers of Texas. The sample selected for study included the 138 young farmer chapters that were continuing to operate during the 1970-71 year.

Area supervisors of vocational agriculture rated the young farmer chapters within their respective areas into three groups, according to their perception of the performance level of chapters in achieving the purposes of the young farmer program as outlined in the Young Farmer Manual of the State Association of Young Farmers of Texas. Thus, 44 chapters were rated at performance level I (highest rating), 44 at performance level II, and 40 at performance level III (lowest rating). Chapter ratings were utilized as the dependent variables for the study. Level II chapters were not considered in drawing conclusions relative to levels I and III chapters, however, since they served basically to broaden the distinction between characteristics of high and low performance chapters.

Data for the independent variables were collected through use of a questionnaire from the advisors of young farmer chapters selected for the sample. The independent variables consisted of characteristics of advisors, members, chapters and activities, procedures utilized in conducting chapter activities, and of the school and community where chapters were located.

Where data were of a continuous nature, the one-way analysis of variance statistical method was used to determine association at the .05 level of probability between independent and dependent variables. The chi-square test was used to determine association where only discrete data were available.

The summary of findings follows:

1. The level of performance at which young farmer chapters were rated was not significantly associated with the number of years teachers had served as advisors to young farmer chapters, the number of years they had taught vocational agriculture, nor the number of years they had taught at the school where they were located at the time of the study.

2. Neither the age of advisors not the number of graduate hours completed were significantly associated with the level of performance at which chapters were rated.

3. Teachers of vocational agriculture who sponsored chapters that were rated at a high level of performance assigned a significantly higher level of importance to young farmer chapters in achieving the objectives of vocational agriculture than did teachers of chapters rated at a low level.

4. Members of chapters rated at a high level of performance were significantly younger than were the members of chapters rated at a low level of performance. The mean age of members in level I chapters was 31.8 years compared to almost 35 for chapters rated at Level III.

5. Chapters composed of a large number of members who had completed high school or one college degree were rated significantly higher than chapters composed of members who had achieved other levels of education.

6. Young farmer chapters composed of a larger number of members who were employed full-time in agricultural occupations other than production agriculture were rated significantly higher than were chapters with fewer members employed in this occupational category. No significant association was found between the level at which chapters were rated and the number of members employed as full or part-time farm operators, managers, farm workers, or the number employed in non-agricultural occupations.

7. Chapters that conducted a larger number of educational and social meetings were rated significantly higher than were chapters conducting a smaller number of such meetings. Chapters that conducted a large number of educational meetings in the subject matter areas of production agriculture, management, and agricultural mechanics were rated significantly higher than chapters conducting a smaller number of such educational meetings. The number of meetings conducted as local field days was not significantly associated with the way chapters were rated.

8. Chapters rated at a high level of performance had significantly larger membership than did chapters rated at a low level of performance.

9. Young farmer chapters rated at a high level of performance had a significantly higher number of members in attendance at an area young farmer convention, an area field day, or the state young farmer convention, than did low performance chapters.

10. Chapters that conducted a larger number of community service activities were rated significantly higher than chapters that conducted a smaller number of such activities. The number of chapters sponsoring local awards programs was not associated with the ratings assigned young farmer chapters.

11. No significant relationship was found between the number of members visited and the ratings assigned chapters.

12. The means used to plan meetings, utilization of an advisory committee for planning the young farmer programs, and the time schedule used for planning meetings were not significantly different for chapters rated at high or low levels of performance.

13. Chapters rated at a high level of performance had a significantly higher number of meetings taught by persons other than advisors, members, or Texas Education Agency Adult Specialists, than did chapters rated at a low level.

14. Neither the method used to notify members of meetings nor the method used to recruit members were significantly associated with the level at which chapters were rated.

15. The perceived attitude of school administrators toward the young farmer program, sponsorship of a young homemaker chapter, and the number of students enrolled in vocational agriculture were not significantly different for chapters rated at high and low levels.

16. Chapters rated at a high level of performance had a significantly larger number of teachers of vocational agriculture than did chapters rated at a low level.

17. Chapters located in young farmer districts where the major source of income was agriculture were not rated significantly different from chapters located in industry or business based economies.

18. Chapters located in communities with a larger number of other agricultural and civic organizations were not rated significantly different from those located in communities with a smaller number of such organizations.

Conclusions

In so far as the sample in this study was representative of young farmer chapters, the following conclusions seem to be warranted:

1. Area supervisors of vocational agriculture can rate accurately the performance level of young farmer chapters.

2. Chapters rated as being highly successful by area supervisors possess characteristics that are distinctly different from those rated as being less successful. Chapters considered to be highly successful had significantly (a) higher ratings assigned to the importance of young farmer chapters by advisors, (b) younger members, (c) more members that had completed high school and that had completed one college degree, (d) more members that were engaged in an

agricultural occupation other than production agriculture, (e) larger numbers of social and educational meetings conducted with the educational meetings consisting of higher numbers of production agriculture, management, and agricultural mechanics meetings, (f) larger memberships, more members in attendance at area and state meetings, more community service activities, larger numbers of resource persons used for teaching young farmer classes, and (g) more teachers of vocational agriculture employed in schools.

The major hypothesis of this research, which stated that characteristic differences exist between chapters considered to be performing at a high level in achieving the purposes and goals of the State Association of Young Farmers of Texas and those performing at a low level was, therefore, supported.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations seem appropriate for enhancing the young farmer program in Texas:

1. A concerted effort should be made through pre-service and in-service educational programs to improve the attitude of teachers of vocational agriculture toward the importance of the young farmer program in meeting the educational needs of young men in agriculture.

2. Approximately one educational meeting should be conducted monthly. The subject matter should consist of production, management, or agricultural mechanics, in accordance with the needs of the membership. Social meetings should be held occasionally throughout the year.

3. Persons employed in agricultural occupations in addition to those in farming should be encouraged to become members of young farmer chapters.

4. Members should be encouraged to attend area and state meetings.

5. Chapters should be involved in community service activities.

6. The establishment of multiple teacher departments should be encouraged so that additional time of one or more teachers can be allocated to the educational program of young farmers.

7. Extensive use should be made of resource persons available for teaching young farmer classes.

8. Further study should be conducted to determine effective methods for improving teacher attitude toward the young farmer program.

9. A study should be made to identify factors influencing participation in young farmer chapters.

10. Research should be conducted to determine reasons for the decline in the number of young farmer chapters in Texas.